

Draft Individual Review Form

Proposal number: 2001-I213-2

Short Proposal Title : Educating Farmers and Landowners in Biological Resource Management

1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?

Yes- both the education/outreach and demonstration site goals and objectives of the project are clearly defined. The proponent demonstrates how the project goals address the CalFed ERP goals as well. The hypotheses presented are clearly stated and ask the question: If the project is implemented and the project goals are met, will the hypotheses be proven to be true, that is that: farmers educated through this program will implement new land stewardship practices, these practices will spread geographically over time through active collaboration and involvement with growers and landowners, and finally, the attitude of those growers and landowners can change if they are engaged as partners and understand the economic and ecologic benefits of adopting these practices.

1b1) Does the conceptual model clearly explain the underlying basis for the proposed work?

The conceptual model clearly describes the educational path that the proposed project would take- that of collaboration and multi-stakeholder participation and information exchange vs. a more traditional model of top-down information dissemination.

1b2) Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project?

I believe that overall the education and outreach approach is well designed and appropriate for meeting the project goals. I have some reservations about the commitment to the project from local landowners. Landowners are supposed to sit on the Management Teams and will be volunteering their land as demonstration sites for long term restoration projects. It appears that the project is going to do the restoration for the farmers, and there are no matching costs associated with this. Are there willing farmers to carry this goal forward? If so, what will be their contribution to implementing, and more importantly maintaining these demonstration sites? As well, the Management Teams will be helping farmers to write farm plans, but the allotted time for visiting the farms to see if the farm plans are being implemented is only once per year. Given the relatively short time frame of three years, is it long enough to establish Management Teams, do outreach to farms to include them on the teams, write farm plans, implement them and then monitor for the success of the project in this way? I believe that CAFF has a proven track record with many growers in the region, so this may not be an issue- perhaps there are farmers ready to go and willing to commit time to these tasks.

1c1) Has the applicant justified the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project?

As stated above, I have concerns about the demonstration sites and the level of farmer commitment to them, that will be established with this project. I realize that there is a need to start somewhere within a community, to get some real projects on the ground. The proposal assumes that there are willing farmers who will participate in many of the aspects of this program that require a real commitment of time- such as the Management Teams, writing of farm plans and establishing demonstration plots. The proposal does not directly address these concerns and there are no matching funds demonstrated to show this good faith. The proposal budget is heavy to the side of consultants and the cost requirements of the demonstration projects are high.

1c2) Is the project likely to generate information that can be used to inform future decision making?

I believe that the proposed education and outreach materials and forums are capable of influencing people to make better decisions about their land use practices. I also believe that seeing demonstration projects in one's own community can provide necessary influence to change the ways that people make decisions about their land use practices.

2a) Are the monitoring and information assessment plans adequate to assess the outcome of the project?

Yes, I have reviewed the proposed monitoring and assessment strategies and they appear to be sound and timely. The project would be evaluated at two different times via surveys- once at the end of year one/beginning of year two and again at the end of year three. The monitoring will focus on both ecological effects as well as social/attitudinal changes.

2b) Are data collection, data management, data analysis, and reporting plans well-described, scientifically sound and adequate to meet the proposed objectives?

The data collection will be intensely focused during the first six months of the project, in order to assess research and planning needs and existing conditions within the regions. My concern and reservations are that much of the information that is proposed to be collected is perhaps already known, so the focus should be on collecting that data when appropriate and not recreating the research to get this information. The budget item for this task (Task 1) seems very high, but perhaps not having the appropriate information from the start, could be the number one cause for failure later in the project. All of the data collected will be managed throughout the life of the project and a final data collection and summary period will come at the close of the project.

3) Is the proposed work likely to be technically feasible?

I believe that the educational forums are very feasible and perhaps my other concerns are not of issue- depending on the community- of which I know nothing about. Again, I have reservations about the farmers/landowners commitments to the demonstration sites and to the farm plans. I would like to know how many landowners sit on the Merced TAC at the present, and what their commitment has been to that program. It may be technically feasible for the Conservation Corps to go in and do the work for the farmer, but if they aren't going to maintain it, it becomes unsustainable.

4) Is the proposed project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project?

I believe that CAFF has a very solid reputation with growers and landowners and is perhaps able to reach a sector of that community that many other groups and agencies are not capable of reaching. They have a track record in CalFed projects already, strong administration abilities and a seemingly talented staff

Miscellaneous comments

Overall Evaluation

Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating

This project has many facets and is a huge request for CalFed dollars, so it is difficult to make summary comments about the project as a whole. I believe that the overall strengths of the proposal are that it comes from CAFF, an organization that is already working with landowners and growers, so that is an "in" that is needed and coveted in this field. I also believe that the watershed approach is extremely beneficial for growers to acknowledge and embrace. As stated above, I have reservations about the actual commitment of farmers to the physical demands of the project (beyond attending workshops), which are the writing of farm plans and the demonstration sites.

Summary Rating

☐ Excellent

- ☐ Very Good- I rate this as good to very good.
 - ☐ Good
 - ☐ Fair
 - ☐ Poor
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